

SINCLAIR
LEWIS



By
Oliver Harrison

BY SINCLAIR LEWIS



<i>Our Mr. Wrenn</i>	1914
<i>The Trail of the Hawk</i>	1915
<i>The Job</i>	1917
<i>The Innocents</i>	1917
<i>Free Air</i>	1919
<i>Main Street</i>	1920
<i>Babbitt</i>	1922
<i>Arrowsmith</i>	1925
<i>Hobohemia (a play)</i>	1919
<i>Produced in New York</i>	

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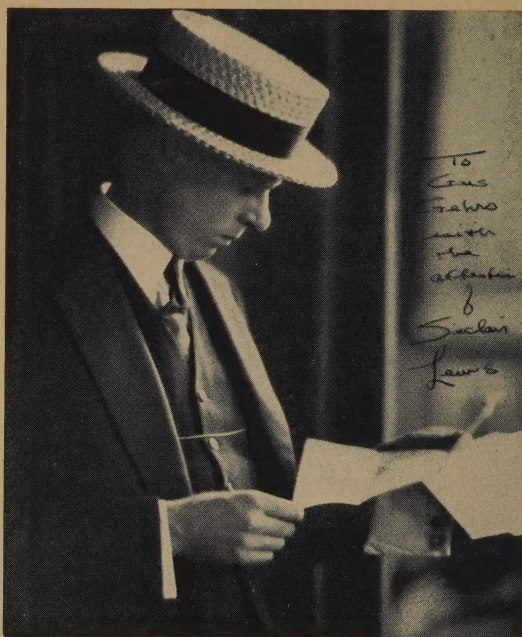
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By Oliver Harrison



HARCOURT, BRACE AND COMPANY
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BY OLIVER HARRISON



NOTHING could be more typical of Midwestern America than the boyhood of Sinclair Lewis, author of *Babbitt* and *Main Street*. He was born on February 7, 1885, in Sauk Center, Minnesota, a prairie village of twenty-five hundred people, among the wheat fields, the dairy farms, and little lakes. He is descended from some ten generations of Yankees who, in the Housatonic Valley of Connecticut and about Gloversville, N. Y., have farmed and inconspicuously kept store ever since the founder, a Welsh miner, ventured to America.

Lewis's father is a country doctor. His mother was born in London, Ontario, the daughter of a doctor who during the Civil War journeyed South to fight for the Union and who settled afterward on a farm in southern Minnesota. Lewis also has a surgeon brother and a physician uncle, so that the hardships and devotion to duty that make up the life of the country doctor have always been familiar to him. Doc Kennicott in *Main Street* is taken from his own people. A youngster, driving with his father on country calls, behind "spanking grays," he was often drafted to

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assist in surgical operations by giving the anesthetic or sterilizing implements.

His boyhood was of the town and the times: the school of damp-looking yellow brick, with rather woolly portraits of Lowell and Longfellow in the rooms; skating on Sauk Lake, or coasting with a ferocious bob-sled; sawing and splitting popple—not poplar—for the kitchen range; mowing the lawn in summer; hunting for partridges through endless autumn afternoons; and reading Scott, Dickens, Tennyson, and the masterpieces of Kirk Munroe and Harry Castlemon. Neither in athletics nor in scholarship was the thin, nervous, red-headed boy distinguished; and in this one can draw a close parallel between his boyhood and that of the majority of famous writers. In his senior year in high school, he stood fifth in a class of nine; he lost the “oratorical contest”; and he says that the only reason why he ran on the class relay team was that four boys were required for the team—and there were exactly four in the class.

Indeed, Lewis was chiefly known in the school for what seemed to his neighbors fantastic ideas. He had studied Greek with the Episcopalian parson, and he desired to study French, though in Sauk Center French is known to be valueless and its study tinged with impropriety. He attended the Congregationalist Sunday School, where his unwillingness to accept ready-made opinions, his iconoclasm about accepted dogmas such as Jonah and the whale, earned him the personal attention of the pastor.

It was his decision not to go to the University of Minnesota that marked him definitely from the rest of the

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boys, to whom it was the only reasonable step to take in the pursuit of higher education. Lewis had read about life in Eastern universities, and talked enthusiastically of Harvard, Yale, and Columbia. The man who collected for the harvester company stopped the boy on the street to explain, "If you go off to one of these Eastern colleges, you'll get a lot of expensive tastes and not be able to earn one cent more money." That expressed in a phrase the judgment of the town.

But Lewis's father was born near New Haven; he remembered the graces of South Middle; and he consented to Yale. The arrival of this long-legged young man from the Middle West was quite unheralded on Yale's sophisticated campus. But it was a vital step in his development, for while it was true that he did not find himself in sympathy with the mental environment of an Eastern college, and was in constant rebellion against its cast-iron social formulas, it nevertheless offered an immensely wider scope for his illimitable curiosity and his restless mind. The college soon became aware of him, though no one, it is quite certain, realized that he was to become the most widely known graduate of his generation. He was different; he would not fit into the common mold—and consequently he was regarded with the intangible hostility and the pretense of indifference that are the familiar reactions of the American college boy to the individual who will not conform.

But he began to write and he became an editor of the venerable Yale literary magazine. His mind was definitely becoming absorbed in the knowledge that he was to be a

novelist. The new ideas, people, and situations that were pouring in on him were crystallized into the form of an endless succession of plots. He discovered, in short, the fertility of his own mind.

In three years he felt that he had absorbed all that the college environment could give him. There was a great deal more, without doubt, on the shelves of the university library, but it was not knowledge in the abstract he sought. It was life itself. To be brief, he left college at the beginning of his senior year and joined the socialist and utopian colony, Helicon Hall, which had been founded by Upton Sinclair in New Jersey. And his position in this enterprise was that of janitor. He stoked the furnace and ran the patent washing machine in the kitchen, while the community cook, a Master of Arts, baked the vegetarian dinner, and the scullion, a single-tax lawyer, peeled the potatoes.

When he was not engaged in these humble tasks, he wrote poetry. He was not sufficiently sure of himself as yet, or of the validity of his ideas, to attempt fiction. That indeed has been one of Lewis's most marked characteristics. He has never been willing to begin a task until he was certain that it was worth doing and that his mind could trace it to its furthest limits. He has never written a novel or a short story for which he did not have more than sufficient material; he has never created a character whose entire life, and indeed whose genealogy, was not at his finger tips. The Helicon Hall episode was, for a youngster, an enlivening experience, with Emma Goldman and dubious European barons calling on the same

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evening. But Lewis felt that his future lay elsewhere than in laundering, and moved with a young writer he had met at the colony, to a rather dirty tenement in the gas-house district of Manhattan. For several months Lewis made an excessively meager living by writing child verse for household magazines and jokes for *Life* and *Puck*. By sudden but strictly temporary good fortune he found a job as assistant editor on *Transatlantic Tales*, a magazine that has since collapsed. After a few months he resigned to write fiction, as a free lance. He discovered that he was not yet ready. The ideas were there—they were assuming more and more concrete shape in his mind—but the compulsion to put them down on paper was still lacking. It was life, rather than writing about life, that absorbed him.

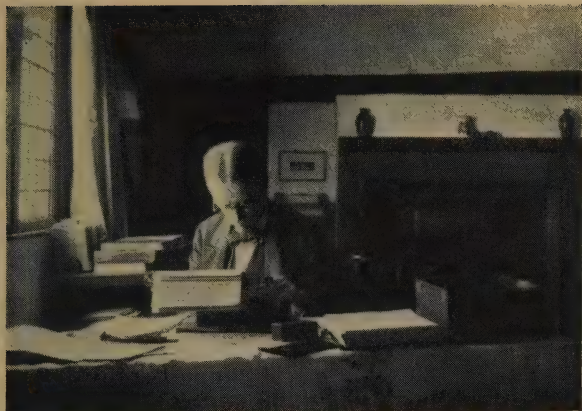
He had, during college vacations, made two trips to England on cattle-boats, feeding steers as the freighter rolled in the Banks fog. Now he decided that if for the time being he was improbable as a writer, he would try his hand at adventuring; and he took passage—steerage—to Panama, to seek a job on the canal. . . . He did not get the job. . . . There was a prejudice against lyric-writers at the I. C. C. headquarters at Colon. The executives obviously preferred employees who understood shorthand and could instantly calculate the number of feet in a pile of lumber or do other humdrum things that neither Yale nor Helicon Hall had taught him. Lewis returned to the United States and to Yale. His class had graduated and he took his B. A. with the Class of 1908.

In view of the almost magic quality of Sinclair Lewis's

rise to the popular and critical success he has attained—for he is today at the age of 40 one of the major novelists of America—it would be fitting to write that he began to attract the attention of the literary world when he left college. One feels that he should have been ready to present some proof of his genius. Instead, he had to find out during the next few years that for the young artist who has not settled down to his craft, the business of making a living is deplorably difficult. And Lewis was not yet ready to settle down to anything; he seemed to have taken only a few steps toward the limitless possibilities for discovery that encircled him. Gifted with an original mind, he was a man who instinctively saw everything in life from a different angle and in different terms from the vast majority of men. He was like an explorer on the threshold of an unknown continent. And it belonged to the quality of his youth that these differences between himself and other men should at one moment seem to be unbridgeable chasms, and in the next the self-delusions of an egoist. The young man who thinks in new terms must always be assailed with annihilating doubts of the worth of his opinions.

Lewis solved his problems with courage and with honesty. First, if he was to become a writer, he must learn the technique of his craft. He was, during the next few years, constantly writing and then rejecting his work. If he was to live during this time, he must discipline himself until he could compete efficiently with men who lived for and by their salaries.

The second conception did not come until later. After



Typing the first page of "Babbitt" in an old village in Kent, England



Putting the final touches to the manuscript of "Babbitt" on the S. S. Aquitania en route to New York



Sinclair Lewis, gun, pipe, and tent



*A stop-over at a Free Trader's house
in Canada to do some mending*

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decidedly unsuccessful newspaper work in Waterloo, Iowa, on the *Bulletin* in San Francisco, on the Associated Press in an editorial position, and as the editor of a magazine for the deaf, published in Washington, he decided that he was not qualified as a journalist. He had, in the meantime, as the result of the surprising acceptance of a short story by the *Red Book*, tried free-lancing once more. Friends whom he had met at Helicon Hall wrote to him of the charms of Carmel, California, and he went West (by day coach all the way, with lunches in paper boxes) to be literary among the mountains and abalones. With William Rose Benét, the poet, he lived for six months (on a borrowed hundred dollars) in a portable bungalow. Theirs was the Bohemian life; they cooked, they picnicked among the dunes, they wrote masterpieces at midnight. There was but one flaw. Lewis could not sell a word he wrote, and the adjectival passion grows cold at the approach of hunger. In six months, after submitting to the magazines dozens of short stories, metaphysical sonnets, aphorisms, and four-page poems about Sir Lancelot, he sold one thing—a joke—to *Judge*.

Apparently at his chosen profession he was a rank failure. Actually, although he was too bitterly engaged with his own reverses to realize it, he was on the highroad to success. He was learning his trade, discovering that to be a creative writer one cannot sit down in a fine frenzy and bring immortal things to fruition. The thought of abandoning his chosen career forever never occurred to him, but he determined that if he could not be a success in one way he would in another. He did not spend any time in

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blaming the world and its editors for their failure to recognize a genius in his manuscripts. From his desk on the *Volta Review*, the magazine for the deaf, he planned a stop-gap career as editor of an all-fiction magazine, and came to New York in late 1910 to do editorial work for Stokes at a salary of twelve and a half dollars a week.

Here he stayed for two years. Then, in turn, he became assistant editor of *Adventure*, editor of the Publisher's Newspaper Syndicate, which prepared a book-review page for eight various newspapers, and at last editor and advertising manager for George H. Doran Company. And it is to be noted that he was successful and hard-working at these tasks. He spent eight hours a day at what is in reality a mentally fatiguing occupation. The wild, impetuous youth who had gone to Helicon Hall had disciplined himself into a capable worker. It was at this time that the dynamic quality of his intellect became most apparent to those who knew him. He was performing the extremely difficult feat of working all day and writing a novel most of the night. This novel was *Our Mr. Wrenn*, his first. It was accepted and published by Harper & Brothers in 1914.

Lewis saw that a comfortable living was assured him as long as it should be necessary for him to work at a salary, and that if his novel succeeded and he could endure the strain of writing another under the same conditions, the end of his interminable bondage was in sight. For the first time in his life his future seemed a smooth path. Then came his marriage to Grace Livingston Hegger in April of 1914 and a year and a half of suburban commut-

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ing to his office in New York. Hundreds of people on those packed Long Island trains must have commented on the red-headed, lean man who wrote feverishly on a large sheaf of scratch paper morning and evening, uninterrupted by the jolting of the train. He was working on another novel, and he seized on those fifty minutes between town and city, which were to his neighbors a period of almost intolerable boredom, as a heaven-sent opportunity.

Our Mr. Wrenn was the chronicle of a meek New York clerk who went wandering on cattle-boats. The new novel, *The Trail of the Hawk*, published in 1915, was a still more ambitious concept—a story of marriage and of an aviator who was treated realistically rather than as a knightly hero. It is perhaps the only good novel that has been principally written on a commuters' train. One has to consider the energy and determination which made this possible for a man who never caught his morning train without running for it, and whose day in the city was filled with work and with a strenuous extension of the friendships he was rapidly acquiring. A great many people were becoming aware that this young editor was "different," that it might be worth while to keep a speculative eye on him.

In the summer of 1915, when Mr. and Mrs. Lewis were on a vacation, walking the length of Cape Cod, he had what seemed an amusing idea for a short story. Quite without expectation of its being accepted, he sent it to the *Saturday Evening Post*. It was taken, with an encouraging letter from George Horace Lorimer. In three months, the magazine had taken three more stories, and in Decem-

ber, 1915, Lewis again resigned, again tried free lancing.

But there was a world of difference between his previous attempts at freedom and the reasonable probability now that he would never have to return to an office. There was nothing harebrained or insecure about his projects for the future. His mind was filled with so many outlines for novels and short stories that he was aware that if by some miracle his inspiration ceased, he could not write half of them. And he was also aware that as a writer he had an extraordinary and unusual gift—that he had what almost amounted to a double personality. He could write short stories of the most popular variety with facile ease; and at the same time his conception of the novel as a complex art that needed all of his abilities remained clear and unsullied. It is probable, indeed, that if his absorbing passion had not been for the novel, Sinclair Lewis would have become one of the foremost short-story writers of this country. To repeat, it was not the fact that he could write both novels and short stories that was remarkable, but the fact that they remained so clearly separated in his mind. His short stories, of which he wrote many at constantly increasing prices in the next four years, were simply, for him, a more agreeable and profitable means of earning a living than he had encountered before.

In 1919 a successful serial appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Free Air*—an adventurous interlude with a garageman hero—which Harcourt, Brace and Company issued as one of their first books when they began publishing. Before this, Lewis had written his third novel, *The Job*, a serious study of business women in New York.

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Meantime the Lewises wandered continually—from New York to Florida and Georgia for the winter; up to Minnesota; then, in a "flivver," driving from Minnesota to Seattle, and Seattle to San Francisco. They returned to New York, where Wells, their only child, was born in 1917; but they set out again, and spent a winter in St. Paul, a summer on Cape Cod, winter in Minneapolis, summer in a small Minnesota town and in a drive to Washington, D. C., via Tennessee, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. For two winters they were residents of Washington, where *Main Street* was written.

Main Street, which brought Sinclair Lewis's name before the American public with startling brilliance, suddenly altered his conception of the possibilities that were opening before him. This is not the place for a critical estimate of that extraordinary novel; it is sufficient to give some idea of its genesis and of its effect on him as a writer.

The conception of the novel itself had been in Lewis's mind for a long time. Fifteen years before its publication, during a college vacation, he had sketched a rough outline of it in which its main figure was Guy Pollock, the small-town lawyer, and he had intended to call it "The Village Virus." During the intervening years he had started to write this novel three times, on the last occasion completing some thirty thousand words. But though he had abandoned the attempt each time, he had kept it definitely in the background of his mind, adding to it and revising it from time to time as his knowledge and experience of life grew. To him it had become one of the many

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novels that he must write some day when he felt equal to the task. Perhaps only a writer will understand that the concept for a novel can lie dormant for years, and yet, even while he is unremittingly engaged in other work, seem to expand of its own accord, as if the very concept of it were endowed with vitality and life. Always it was planned as a non-commercial book which could by no miracle sell more than five or six thousand copies. After a year of work, during which Lewis abandoned his lucrative short stories and even plunged mildly into debt, he completed *Main Street* in the summer of 1920, and it was published in October.

In two months, by Christmas, 1920, *Main Street* had sold 56,000 copies. By the end of 1922 it had reached the immense sale of 390,000 copies. It had been translated or was being translated into German, Dutch, Swedish, and French. Literally, the public and the critics had been taken by storm. In this one book Lewis had attained the success and popular fame that he had imagined in optimistic moments as the result of almost a lifetime of consistent labor. It did not alter his attitude toward himself or toward other people, nor did it "go to his head"; but it vitally changed his problem as a young novelist, for his future was no longer a question of steady writing and slowly glowing recognition, but of continuing to live on the heights to which he had attained. It was the difference between a slow conquest and a brilliant, dashing victory. To satisfy himself as an artist he must continue to satisfy the immense audience that he had captured; consolidate the ground that he had won, and at the same

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time climb still higher. The young writer faced with so formidable a task may well feel faint-hearted at the beginning of any new work, for he cannot allow himself the ease of uninspired pages. His typewriter becomes a relentless enemy conspiring for his failure, since the only other alternative he can conceive is something approaching immortality. With one book to be entitled "the most important novelist in America," even if one doubts its wisdom, is to assume an almost intolerable burden of suspense. But if *Main Street* brought the difficulties that go with celebrity, it also liberated him to write only what he wished. It was the final emancipation of the artist from the necessity of earning his living at uncongenial tasks. He had given up first the office and now the short story as a means of livelihood. He was free.

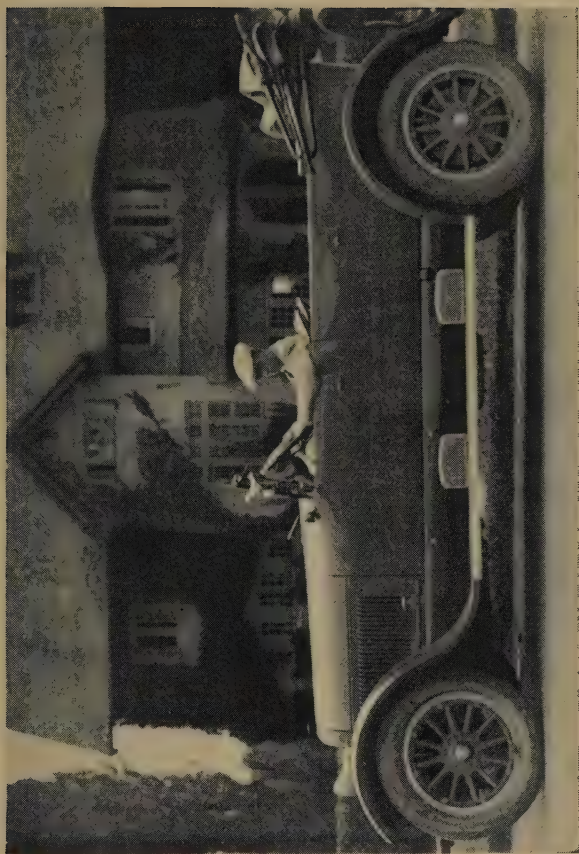
Everyone recalls the controversy that raged in the press over *Main Street*, the endless editorials, the exalted praise and the bitter condemnation. Lewis's answer to the critics that called it a *tour de force*, a freak of popularity on the part of a whimsical public, was *Babbitt*, which was written for the most part abroad, in an effort to escape the hunters of literary lions who tracked him about America, for while it gave to life the excitement of an endless pursuit, it robbed him of his time and tranquillity.

Almost universally in the critical world, *Babbitt* was called better than *Main Street*. A list of authors and critics who have called it "a masterpiece," "the greatest novel of a generation," "even better than *Main Street*," etc., would embrace the literary aristocracy of this country and of England. Even the conservative English reviews

have paid it the compliment of devoting their first pages to it, and, as an English critic has said, "no English novel of recent times has received so much attention or such praise." For the first time in a generation an American novel was the "best-seller" in England, as, indeed, it was in America.

Babbitt attacked a tradition that was not only still living but one that is gaining strength every day. Can one express the idea more clearly than by saying that it attacked "Babbittism," the cult of the Rotarian, the booster, the smart business man; the entire order of the machine-made society in the robust growing cities which number their populations in the tens of thousands? And the business man read it, slapped his thighs, exclaimed that it was true of his neighbors, and at the same time winced at the wounds that it inflicted on his own self-esteem.

In the meantime Lewis and his family returned to America and settled down in Hartford, causing no little apprehension among its New England inhabitants that their genial visitor would proceed to "write them up." Needless to say, Mr. Lewis had no such intention in his mind. He had to live somewhere, and Hartford was an agreeable change of scene. What would he write next? There were half a dozen or more novels begging to be put inside the cover of a book; hundreds of men and women whom he had met had etched themselves on his mind as dramatic possibilities. There were a great many people who were quite ready to answer the question for him. Logic pointed to the fact that he had written two novels of what seemed to be an obvious trilogy; he had described



Sinclair Lewis in front of his house in Hartford



*Sinclair Lewis and a group of English friends,
John Drinkwater, Mrs. Ainley, Henry
Ainley, the star of Dunsany's "If,"
Algernon Blackwood*

the village and the city. There remained the metropolis, New York or Chicago, with the odds on New York since he had lived and worked there. Indeed, in *The Job* he had already written of one phase of New York life.

But Mr. Lewis did not even flirt with the idea; he was a son of the West, and the great city, while it was necessary to him as a literary man, had never entered into his blood. He did not feel any commission from on high to furnish America with a trilogy. *Babbitt* had been written with such intensity that the fallow period which the author was now experiencing was more necessary to him than he realized. Hartford and the charming country house in which he lived provided him with a refuge during this time of mental quiescence. To the innumerable people who know Sinclair Lewis this term may seem singularly inappropriate, for outwardly he was never quiescent, and certainly Hartford was not aware that this dynamic personality was ever at rest. He was busy exploring the social complexities of an old and aristocratic town and, as usual, making friends with garagemen, laborers, and trolley conductors. It is safe to say that in six months he had a wider acquaintance and knew more about them than many who lived there all their lives. But he was beginning to be seized with a restlessness that could not be shaken off. His creative genius was awake and was crying for nourishment. He tried to satisfy it by considering still more seriously his preconceived themes for novels; they still interested him as much as ever, but surprisingly they refused to run away with his imagination. This restless period ended abruptly one day in

December, 1922. He suddenly bolted for New York and in two days he had found his novel; his mind was aroused; his whole energy concentrated once more on one problem; *Arrowsmith* had been conceived.

At the beginning of this essay into Sinclair Lewis's life we stated that his father, brother, uncle, and grandfather were physicians. In *Main Street* he had portrayed the country doctor, "Doc" Kennicott. And now, through a fortunate and casual meeting in the city with a young man of science, Paul de Kruif, his old idea, a novel founded on the familiar medico of his youth, suddenly grew into a vastly more significant theme. As he saw his new novel, it must show a man who was driven by a passion for discovering the elemental forces of life, a genius who transforms himself from the humble country practitioner to a scientist on the staff of a great medical laboratory, and with his own passion for completeness Lewis wanted to write of this man in every aspect of his life.

The amount of painstaking and laborious research necessary for this new novel would have appalled almost any other writer. Lewis knew nothing of science; he must acquire an incredible mass of abstract knowledge; he must learn what it is like to be a scientist, and what are a scientist's ambitions and fears and personal life. Consider also that the scientist in his new novel was to be no mere tyro but a genius, perhaps world-famous, a man to whom science meant more than a beloved mistress or than life itself. Lewis knew well enough the dangers of his task; it is one of the most difficult of literary feats to convince one's readers that a character is either as

great or as much of a genius as the author professes, and he must write of a man who was to spend most of his life over the laboratory table in such terms that it would inflame his reader's imagination.

In twenty-four hours after he had met Dr. de Kruif in New York, Lewis had sketched out roughly the outline of his novel—it was to take him more than two years of constant work to fill in this skeleton. As he conceived it he was to sweep into the current of his hero's life a great section of the United States; one part was to deal with the conquest of the plague on a tropical island. A trip to the West Indies would furnish a good means of beginning his researches, and Lewis knew that Paul de Kruif was the one man to help him.

Dr. de Kruif had just left the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, where he had been for two years as associate in the division of Pathology. During the war he was a Captain in the Sanitary Corps of the Medical Department of the United States Army, and before this he had been for five years in the Bacteriology Department of the University of Michigan as instructor and then as Assistant Professor. While in the Army he worked on the poison and antitoxin of the bacillus of gas gangrene and made the first prophylactic injections of gas gangrene serum into the wounded of the American Army—Fifth Division. At the Rockefeller Institute his work concerned the mechanism of the weakening of the virulence of disease-producing microbes and, with Dr. J. H. Northrup, the fundamental questions of immunity. He has published many researches in the *Journal of Infectious Diseases*, the

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Journal of Experimental Medicine, and the *Journal of Experimental Physiology*. His work is known abroad, as well as in this country.

In January 1923, Lewis and Dr. de Kruif started for Barbados, their final destination London, though whether they were to reach there via China or Buenos Aires was left to the turn of the wheel. Mrs. Lewis was to follow him to London with young Wells, who was now seven years old. It goes without saying that Mrs. Lewis was by this time accustomed to this erratic "Pack your bags, we leave for Timbaktu tonight" method of existence.

Dr. de Kruif described in a magazine Mr. Lewis's method of work in his tiny cabin on board the Guiana.

"The work once begun never ended. On the ship I might be wakened at six o'clock from a tangled dream about one of our characters. It was Lewis calling, 'Boy, two cups of coffee, please.' Before the coffee came we were both sitting up in our bunks, Lewis without so much as a 'Good morning,' denouncing the views of hygiene or medicine or religion that I had expressed as we went to bed the night before. I would sit for a time placid under his abuse, until the glow of the hot coffee jarred me into violent replies and rebuttals. Presently the knock of the polite steward and down the companionway we would go, arguing passionately all the way to the bath to the disgust of the passengers who were waked too soon. After breakfast there was no dawdling and no gazing at the sea. Lewis sat before a little folding table on which was his typewriter, a lank, red-haired figure in a gaudy dressing gown. Every few seconds with two powerful fingers he

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made his flimsy little machine explode into staccato bursts of racket that reminded one of machine-gun fire, stopping now and then to fumble a little hurriedly and nervously among the confused pile of maps, huge books, diagrams, and papers that littered the table, the couch on which he sat, the floor, the washstands, and the life-preserver racks on the bulkheads.

"As time went on our characters more and more replaced the actual people of the world about us. We became a pair of lunatics whose only friends were the fanciful but real figures of dark-haired Martin Arrowsmith, the remote satanically sagacious Gottlieb, the small inarticulate but strangely wise Leora. Everyone we saw suggested some comparison with one of our new people; every scene and place was important, only in so far as it would fit into the imaginary scene and places of the new world Lewis was making. His interest in science was just as sincere and intense as his devotion to his characters. Himself an incomparable observer, he understands that the patient searchers of laboratories are his brothers in spirit, and he was constantly probing me for knowledge of the spirit that moves men to experiment, prodding me with questions about the romance of scientific discovery, because he felt a thrill of adventure here which is like that of happening upon unknown tribes in strange mountains."

The ship with these nonunion laborers aboard, wove its leisurely passage through the Caribbean, to St. Thomas, St. Kitts, San Lucia, Trinidad, and Barbados. In one of the many islands they passed de Kruif found the place for which they were searching as the scene of an epidemic of

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bubonic plague in *Arrowsmith*. Lewis was hammering his typewriter in the deserted ship and his friend turned back to drag him out into the heat. Here it was—a large square plunged into a deserted Sunday stillness, whitewashed houses, ancient arcades, shadowed with giant mango trees and plotched with dashes of molten sunlight. The author drank it in, and by the time the ship had cleared the island he had added pages of impressions of fantastic funeral processions of plague victims passing below shuttered balconies to the great pile of notes that were carefully stacked in the cabin. One day the features of Martin Arrowsmith, which still remained a blank, were discovered in the same haphazard way in a grave, black-haired youngster who stared at Lewis across his rum swizzle glass in the ship's smoking-room. At Trinidad, Panama, and Barbados, they waited for another steamer to make sure of their impressions, and then, when this part of the work was done and there remained nothing that he might need from the tropics which was not already in his mind or on paper, Lewis sailed with de Kruif for England and arrived there to find winter still in the air.

In London they worked on their notes until June. Lewis's family had established itself comfortably and his son found a governess, but once more their plans were rearranged and they left with him for France, where in Fontainebleau Mrs. Lewis discovered a château that might be rented and Dr. de Kruif remained in London. No writer could find a more delightful place in which to work than Fontainebleau proved to be, a fact which George Moore, for example, knows very well. It is

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doubtful if Lewis was aware of this or any other fact pertaining to his material welfare during this entire summer. He turned day into night, consumed an enormous quantity of cigarettes and coffee, and slept and ate when the mood seized him, for he was completely absorbed in writing the first draft of the novel. Finally it was done, and an exhausted author fled southward in October for a walking trip in Italy. November found him in London again.

It might be said that the most difficult work still lay ahead of him; *Arrowsmith* was to be entirely rewritten. As he had tramped through the Italian countryside, it had continued to grow, and there were passages that must be altered and strengthened, still others that had to come out, and a thousand details had assumed a new aspect. Lewis sat down again at his typewriter, this time in a delightful workroom in the ancient Temple, which for generations had sheltered so many writers.

Slowly the task was completed; winter came and early spring; the Lewises took unto themselves a house in the country; the revision was completed. And while the hedges and fields and all the English countryside burst into bloom, his creative drive began all over again, and another, the final revision, was under way. In the summer Mr. Lewis returned to America, bringing his manuscript with him. He labored all through the voyage, and when the steamer docked a very tired man greeted his friends; he had worked all night and the last page had been added to the great bundle of typewritten manuscript, almost a thousand pages, as the ship reached quarantine

SINCLAIR LEWIS

in the early morning. In March, 1925, *Arrowsmith* was published.

Sinclair Lewis is the first of our new writers to appeal to the intellectuals and at the same time to the audience of hundreds of thousands who cannot be labeled or touched by labels. He has broken the tradition of sentimentality which has so long sterilized American genius and held under its cloying influence the great mass of American readers.

Mr. Lewis's latest novel *Arrowsmith* is different from his earlier novels, or perhaps one should say beyond them. Carol Kennicott and Babbitt were types as well as characters; Dr. Martin Arrowsmith is distinctly unlike anyone else; and this book, with all the hatred of hypocrisy and bunk that is in his earlier novels, has a great creative warmth, a sense of the dignity of a world in which there can be men who sacrifice personal gains to seek other than material rewards. The intense curiosity that drove Sinclair Lewis, the raw, lanky youth, from Sauk Center to New Haven, to Helicon Hall, to New York and California, to England and France, is driving him to more remote places. Last summer he took a long trip through the Canadian wilds. At present he is traveling extensively in Europe, observing everywhere the habits and the moods of mankind with that sharp, darting glance that is so familiar to his friends. Next year he may go to the Orient. It will be impossible to classify him as a writer until it is seen what this great extension of his horizons means to him in the terms of his art.

